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*the cases of Austria and Denmark*

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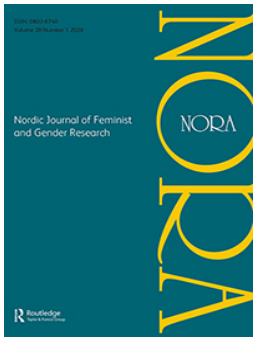
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ARTICLE



# Inclusive Political Intersections of Migration, Race, Gender and Sexuality – The Cases of Austria and Denmark

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## ABSTRACT

The article aims to integrate key concepts from social movement, citizenship and gender theories with a focus on (political) intersectionality at the interface of migration, race, gender and sexuality. It explores the responses from civil society groups to the exclusive intersections of right-wing politics and discourses in Austria and Denmark with a focus on inclusive intersectionality and transversal politics. The article asks if and how the intersectional repertoires of NGOs were able to create transversal politics and joint activities and explains why these NGOs were unable to counter right-wing hegemony. It uses the cases of Austria and Denmark to illustrate the diverse mobilizations of counter-forces against the attempts to forge an anti-migration and anti-Muslim consensus. The focus is on the mobilization of anti-racist and pro-migrant groups, comparing their strategies and inclusionary repertoires including feminist claims, the framing of activist citizenship, acts of citizenship and of solidarity. The article scrutinizes strategies of transversal politics against the exclusionary right in the two countries; shows the influence of the different contexts of civil society mobilization, political cultures, welfare and gender regimes as well as the differences between right-wing forces in the two countries.

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Pro-migrant NGOs; inclusive intersectionality; transversal politics; activist citizenship

## Introduction

Right-wing mobilization across Europe aims at creating a common-sense perspective of difference and inequality (of class, nationality, religion, gender, sexuality), of non-belonging and thus exclusion. Gender often works as a catalyst for discourses and politics of exclusion, of “exclusive intersectionality” (Keskinen, 2017; Meret & Siim, 2013; Sauer & Ajanovic, 2016). While existing analyses focus on the rise of exclusive forms of right-wing populism across Europe, research on counter-forces against the political right is still scarce (for an exception Siim, Krasteva, & Saarinen, 2018).

This article wants to contribute to the understanding of recent civil society mobilization against right-wing forces and racism. We therefore compare anti-right-wing and anti-racist civil society organizations in two countries with successful right-wing mobilization: Austria and Denmark. Theoretically, the article draws on concepts of “activist citizenship” (Isin, 2009) and “political intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991) and elaborates the concepts of “inclusive” and “exclusive” intersectionality. The article assesses strategies against the political instrumentalization of intersecting structures of domination by the radical right for their exclusive aims. Hence, our assumption is that counter-movements against the radical right are successful only if they use an intersectional approach.

We analyse pro-refugees, pro-asylum seekers, anti-racism and anti-discrimination activism between 2013 and 2017 through interviews and focus groups, interpreted with the method of

critical frame analysis. The aim of the article is to identify similarities and differences of the responses from civil society groups to “exclusive intersectionality” at the interface of gender and sexuality, migration and race in the two countries. Are anti-right civil society organizations able to forge alliances with other activist groups through a common “inclusive intersectional” framing? Do anti-racist counter-forces establish a new form of “political intersectionality” (Crenshaw, 1991), i.e. “inclusive intersectionality” around equality and difference, premised on transversal discourses and politics (Yuval-Davis, 2011)? Are they able to mobilize towards solidarity and emancipation which include feminist claims?

Research shows that civic engagement is deeply embedded in time, place and space (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2014). Our research thus wants to explore how the Austrian and Danish political cultures, welfare institutions and gender regimes influence counter-forces against right-wing mobilization. Austria and Denmark are most similar cases with respect to the growing importance of right-wing populist parties and their mobilization against immigrant “Others”. But the two countries are different in their civil society traditions, their welfare regimes and in the regulations of gender and sexuality. While the Austrian welfare state is influenced by corporatist “top-down” organizations, the Danish welfare state has a tradition of civil society mobilization “from below”. Our article asks what the implications of these differences are for citizens’ activism against right-wing exclusive nationalism.

The article proceeds as follows: We first give information about the Austrian and Danish political contexts of counter-forces fighting right-wing populism and racism. Then we elaborate on the theoretical concepts, explain the methods of our study and inform about the empirical data. Finally, we present the comparative findings by focusing on the activities, strategies and frames of anti-racist and anti-right groups and on their potential for inclusive intersectionality and transversal politics. The conclusion summarizes our comparative findings in the light of existing literature on civil society activism.

## **Setting the stage: mobilization against racism and right-wing populism in Austria and Denmark**

Over the past years Austria and Denmark have been characterized by strong right-wing mobilization. In both cases these constellations have triggered counter-forces in civil society since the 1990s. Different from other radical right-wing parties in Europe, the Freedom Party Austria, FPÖ,<sup>1</sup> has along tradition in the legacy of National Socialism. The party’s voter turn-out rose significantly only since the mid-1980s when it mainly focused on mobilizing against the political elite and “Others”, i.e. migrants, and aimed at establishing an exclusive nationalist-populist project (Heinisch, 2012, p.372). The right-wing mobilization since the turn of the millennium evokes images of a natural binary constellation between “them” and “us”, which not only creates Muslims but also LGBTIQ people, feminists, gender researchers, the political and intellectual elite as “Others” and challenges the consensus of societal liberalization and equality of the 1970s. The Austrian right-wing consensus draws on a strong tradition of institutional racism and on xenophobic opinions combined with an “anti-genderist” tone (Mayer & Sauer, 2017). The country’s strong male breadwinner tradition contributes to the anti-gender mobilization and the conservative welfare regime with its closed social partnership structures enables nationalist-exclusive right-wing strategies.

The mobilization resulted in high voting turn-outs of the right-wing populist FPÖ, in the national elections in 2017 and in the FPÖ’s government coalition with the conservative Austrian Peoples’ Party, ÖVP. After the “Ibiza scandal” in May, 2019,<sup>2</sup> the government fell and an interim government of experts was built. In the elections on 29 September 2019 the ÖVP remained the party with the most votes; however, a coalition with the FPÖ seems to be rather unlikely.

The development of counter-forces against the radical right is based in the specific Austrian political culture. In the 1970s, the Austrian social-democratic project of modernization and democratization “from above” slowly opened the political system for new social movements. As a result, a variety of single issue and/or identity-based social movements such as women’s liberation

groups, gay and lesbian movements, peace and environmental movements as well as Third-World Solidarity groups came into being (Foltin, 2004). As early as in the 1980s, especially the women's movement put issues of migration, racism and women in the Third World on its agenda (Mayer, 2018, 141ff.) and feminist immigrant self-help groups have been established, as for instance the organization *LEFÖ*, founded in 1985.<sup>3</sup>

The so-called Waldheim affaire in 1986 confronted the country with its Nazi past and led to the foundation of anti-racist and anti-rightist organizations, such as *Asyl in Not* (Asylum in Distress) in 1985<sup>4</sup> or *Zebra* in 1986 to implement human rights, equality and to fight racism.<sup>5</sup> These organizations were able to link with long-established anti-Nazi organizations, e.g. the *Mauthausen Committee Austria*, MKÖ,<sup>6</sup> the *Documentation Archive of the Austrian Resistance*, DÖW, founded in 1963, and the *Documentation and Information Centre of the Austrian Roma and Sinti association*, founded in 1997.

Overall, since the 1990s Austria has been characterized by growing protest mobilization (Dolezal & Hutter, 2007, p.338). *SOS Mitmensch* was founded in 1992 by Vienna intellectuals to mobilize against the FPÖ referendum of 1993 "Austria first!", calling to restrict immigration laws (Foltin, 2004, p.228). This was the moment when anti-racist and anti-discrimination movements began to spread over Austria, mobilizing against the FPÖ and its excluding and racist claims.

As a reaction to the paradigmatic shift in asylum and integration laws since the early 1990s Austrian protest mobilization focused on anti-racism (Dolezal & Hutter, 2007, p.344) and several NGOs were founded to provide legal, social and psychosocial assistance for migrants and asylum seekers such as *Helping Hands* or *Pink Anti-fascists Vienna*<sup>7</sup> and *ZARA* (Civil courage and anti-racism work).

Since then, the Austrian landscape of NGOs fighting right-wing extremism and supporting migrants is characterized by a plurality of groups that deal with intersecting issues of discrimination. Some are state or quasi-state institutions against fascism and anti-Semitism. Others claim to be independent from state money and thus autonomous with respect to their activities. During the "summer of migration" 2015 quite a few civil society initiatives emerged across the country, while most of the anti-right and anti-racist activities are based in Vienna, grounded in an urban intellectual milieu. However, also union members participate in some activities, thus extending anarrow social composition of these groups. Despite the huge mobilization capacities at the turn of the century, when the FPÖ went into a first government coalition with the Christian-conservatives in 2000 (until 2007), anti-right-wing organizations were unable to stop the wave of success of right-wing groups and to counter their practices and policies of inequality and exclusion.

The Danish approach to democracy and welfare is premised on a public-private interaction between state institutions and civil society organizations with a history of civil society mobilization "from below" through voluntary associations, including trade unions. During the 1970s and 1980s, the mobilization of women's and LGBTIQ movements, the peace movement, anti-nuclear and environmental movements put ideas about participatory democracy, gender equality and sexual rights on the public agenda (Lazaridis, Campani, and Benveniste, 2016). Since the 1990s, these movements lost momentum and were replaced by an array of diverse and less cohesive grassroots organizations (Mikkelsen, 2002), including citizens' mobilization against anti-migration forces. Transnational anti-racist organizations were founded, such as the Danish branch of *SOS against Racism* in 1988,<sup>8</sup> and of the *European Network against Racism* (ENAR)<sup>9</sup> in 1998. At the same time a large number of home-grown Danish initiatives arose to fight discrimination of migrants and ethnic minorities, such as the *Documentation and Counselling Centre for Race Discrimination* (DRC).<sup>10</sup>

In the past two decades, mobilizations of civil society organizations are rooted in the transformation of the country from a liberal and open approach to immigration and asylum to the most restrictive in the Nordic context (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012). The Danish People's Party (DF) has since its establishment in the middle of the 1990s been the most influential representative of the so-called new right (Meret & Siim, 2013). After 2001 the DF became support party for the liberal government, which forced the centre-right parties to adopt strict policies on immigration, asylum,

crime and so-called welfare abuses, integration and citizenship laws. The decade from 2001 to 2011 was thus marked by increasingly polarized positions towards immigrants and refugees (ibid.).

DF achieved a prominent role due to its nativist and anti-immigration positions, especially against Islam, combined with populist appeals to the Danish people. The nativist understanding of the people translated into a gradual normalization of right-wing populist claims also among mainstream parties (Widfeldt, 2015). In addition, it has advanced the culturalist position that Danish values are essential components of Danish democracy, welfare and way of life (Siim & Meret, 2016). Especially Muslim minorities are constructed as “Others” due to their allegedly patriarchal family values.

Exclusive welfare nationalism is premised on support for women’s and gay rights and gender equality which have to be defended as key aspects of “our” culture and values (ibid.). Anti-migration and anti-Muslim discourses and politics are thus closely linked to the Danish gender equality measures and welfare regime. Different from Austria, the Danish welfare regime is universal and fosters the labour market integration of women, the erosion of the male breadwinner-model and gender equality in families, at work and in politics (Siim & Meret, 2013).

Since 2001 the diversity of small pro-migrant, anti-racist and anti-discrimination groups mushroomed mobilizing against anti-migration, and opposition was situated on the political left with close connections to political parties working together with the Social-Democratic led government between 2011 and 2014. In the 2015 parliamentary election the DF became the second largest party after the Social Democracy with 21.1 percent of the votes. Since then Social Democracy has been in opposition until June 2019 and citizens’ activism has been mainly directed at the liberal headed minority government supported by DF.

During the last ten years many new initiatives have emerged in response to the mainstreaming of anti-migration politics and in support of the growing numbers of migrants and refugees, such as the *Ethnic Minority Women’s Council* (EMKR),<sup>11</sup> the Danish advocacy association *Refugees Welcome* (RW)<sup>12</sup> and *Sabaah*,<sup>13</sup> working for the rights of LGBTIQ people with minority ethnic backgrounds. The *Trampoline House* (TH) for asylum-seekers started in 2010,<sup>14</sup> *LGBT Asylum* in 2012<sup>15</sup> and *The Friendly Neighbours* (VB) in 2014, “a movement based on kindness to strangers”.<sup>16</sup> These voluntary associations have become part of the particular Danish “welcome culture”.

The Danish political context changed dramatically after the general election in June 2019 when the DF lost more than half of their mandates.<sup>17</sup> One of the results was a change of government from the liberal headed to a Social Democratic minority government supported by three small left-wing parties, promising an ambitious welfare politics and an immigration policy “that supports integration”.<sup>18</sup> It is too early to evaluate these policy changes, but the government’s decision to accept refugees under the UN quota system may be a first step.

## **Inclusive intersectionality, activist citizenship and transversal politics: theoretical approach and key concepts**

The theoretical concepts from social movement, citizenship, gender and intersectionality theory which we present in this section contribute to explain and assess the opportunities to create cross-movement, transversal cooperation, intersectional communication and solidarity of anti-right mobilization (Della Porta & Mattoni, 2014). One body of literature aims to reframe classical citizenship approaches emphasizing new forms and practices of in/exclusion in contemporary societies (Isin, 2009). Another body of literature stresses the active role of social movements in shaping democracy, focusing on the quality of democracy, inclusion and empowerment (Della Porta, 2015). These approaches can supplement each other, since they stress the agency and voices of (non-)citizens, marginalized social groups, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. They are both in different ways concerned with acts of resistance and solidarity with vulnerable and marginalized groups. Engin Isin (2009, pp. 383–384) proposes the new concept of “activist citizenship”, i.e. citizenship as enacted through struggles for rights of various groups, with a focus on “acts” rather than on status or habitus.



Social movement research has addressed citizens' mobilization in social justice movements (Della Porta, 2015, pp. 14–15). Della Porta's recent work studies the shift to austerity politics, aiming to bring democracy and class back into analyses of protest against austerity politics (*ibid.*, p.222).

Gender research on migration, with the exception of post-colonial studies, has only recently addressed the interface between race/ethnicity, gender sexuality and migration (Mulinari, Keskinen, Irni, & Tuori, 2009; Mulinari & Neergaard, 2014). The intersectionality approach, developed in the US with a focus on gender and race, racism and feminism (Crenshaw, 1991), evolved in Europe and has become a key concept in gender, migration and diversity research (Yuval-Davis, 2011). Gender and migration scholars suggest differentiating between “exclusionary” and “inclusionary intersections”, which create specific positionings in different national contexts (Sauer, Kuhar, Ajanovic, & Saarinen, 2017; Mokre & Siim, 2013, pp. 34–35). “Exclusive intersectionality” refers to the anti-migration and anti-Islam campaigns' adoption of the language of women's rights as central to national or European and Western values (Meret & Siim, 2013; Sauer et al., 2017) which Sara Farris (2017) labels “femonationalism”. Others refer to white women who mobilize on social media and in far-right groups as “white border guard femininities” (Keskinen, 2017) with the aim of excluding “Others”.

Previous research, moreover, confirms how framing has become an important part of mobilizing protest to create inclusive intersectionality around migration, race/ethnicity and gender (Sauer & Ajanovic, 2016; Siim & Mokre, 2013), which sensitizes for discrimination and exclusion. Frames are sets of “common-sense concepts and notions” (Detant, 2005, p.189), which interpret everyday situations (Rein & Schön, 1994). Frames are part of “discursive strategies” (Karner, 2007, p.85) that can mobilize action of civil society organizations. Hence, frames are contested in political struggles but they can also support alliances and joint activities, i.e. frame coalitions.

Following Della Porta (2015) social movement research needs to bring not only class but also gender and race back into the analysis of citizens' activism. We suggest employing the concept of “inclusive political intersectionality”<sup>19</sup> to understand the interface between migration, ethnicity/race, gender and sexuality. Nira Yuval-Davis' transversal approach to intersectionality<sup>20</sup> has inspired our perspective that an important dimension of struggles against the radical right is the creation of transversal politics—across class, race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality (Yuval-Davis, 2011, pp. 197–99; see also Strolovitch, 2007; Leondar-Wright, 2014). Since social justice movements are often “rooted” (*ibid.*, p.199) in a common identity of their members, it is important to shift this identity towards aposition of exchange, communication and cooperation with other groups in pursuit of the common aim of equality, respect for diversity and justice. We label this transversal politics as “inclusive political intersectionality” which mobilizes differences between groups to create contexts of solidarity and recognition of this diversity. This transversal politics of joining forces, resources and frames, we claim, could become an important means for democratization and social justice in transforming right-wing hegemony.

Combining these strands of research, we follow Hans Pühretmayer (2002) who discussed three different “models of antiracism”, that is “reactive” or “moral anti-racism”, “technic-economical anti-racism”, which considers racism as either a consequence of economic conditions or of discriminatory laws (*ibid.*, p.296), and “emancipatory anti-racism”, which fights intersecting practices and structures of discrimination and exclusion (*ibid.*, p.298). Our approach focuses on “emancipatory anti-racism” as an “inclusive intersectional strategy” against right-wing populism and away of creating “transversal politics” of civil society organizations, hence of “activist citizenship”.

Our analysis of civil society activism against the radical right focuses on the challenges to create transversal or inclusive (political) intersectional activities and framings, which might stimulate acts of citizenship and resistance against the radical right and acts of solidarity with vulnerable groups.

## Methods and data

The selected groups, organizations and individuals in Austria and Denmark oppose what they perceive as increasingly discriminatory policies and discourses against migrants and refugees. The comparative material was gathered between 2013 and 2014 in the context of the RAGE project<sup>21</sup> and updated in 2016 and 2017. As we wanted to identify (discursive) networks, collaboration or competition between the activists we employ a critical frame analysis (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007) based on diverse forms of written material, in-depth narratives and focus groups interviews, as well as participatory fieldwork. The objectives of the interviews were to map out a) how the organizations understand themselves, for example as victim-organizations or counter-forces against the radical right; b) their relations to other forces fighting racism and discrimination; c) the relations to mainstream political organizations and institutions.

In Austria, three focus group interviews of around three hours duration were organized with representatives of nine Vienna-based civil society organizations. Moreover, we conducted face-to-face expert interviews with ten representatives from NGOs. Overall, we talked with representatives of twelve organizations<sup>22</sup>: MKÖ, DÖW, *Helping Hands*,<sup>23</sup> MAIZ,<sup>24</sup> *Umbrella Organization of Vienna Youth Centres*; ZARA,<sup>25</sup> *Zebra*,<sup>26</sup> *Asyl in Not*,<sup>27</sup> HOSI,<sup>28</sup> *SOS Mitmensch*,<sup>29</sup> *Offensive gegen Rechts* (Campaign against the Right)<sup>30</sup> and *FairPlay*.<sup>31</sup> In Denmark, individual and focus group interviews with five anti-discrimination and pro-migrant organizations as well as face-to-face expert interviews with ten activists were conducted. Interviewees were active in *Refugees Welcome* (RW),<sup>32</sup> the *Trampoline House* (TH),<sup>33</sup> *The Friendly Neighbours* (VB),<sup>34</sup> the *Danish Chapter of Black Lives Matter* (BLM)<sup>35</sup> and the *Castaway Souls of Denmark*.<sup>36</sup>

The comparison of the activist organizations first analyses the actors' cooperations, joint activities and networks, their "capability to create alliances" (Detant, 2005, p.185) and secondly the main transversal claims, motivations, mobilization frames and narratives of these organizations, their way of mobilizing in the fields of migration, Islam, gender relations and sexual orientation, and their strategies opposing right-wing Othering. We partly transcribed the interview material and detected anti-racist and anti-right-wing frames and intersecting framing according to a critical frame analysis (Verloo & Lombardo, 2007). Next, we compared the framings of the different groups to detect similarities and differences in their frames, discourse coalitions and hence transversal cooperation. Finally, we compare the similarities and differences, potentials and problems in the two countries according to the following dimensions: traditions of civil society mobilization, political culture, welfare state and gender regime, and issues of right-wing hegemonic struggles.

## Mobilization against right-wing populism, racism and othering. Challenges to activist citizenship, inclusive intersectional framings and transversal politics

This section first presents the findings in the two countries with a focus on inclusive intersectionality and transversal politics to assess the challenges to activist citizenship. In the next step we compare the activities and framings of civil society organizations in Austria and Denmark according to the different country settings.

### Cooperation and mobilizing frames in Austria—lack of inclusive intersectionality

To illuminate the strategies of Austrian civil society organizations and their potential of inclusive intersectionality and transversal politics we first identify the major mobilizing frames, namely racism and radical right, their intersectional use and their potential to forge alliances against the radical right. Then we scrutinize the intersectional framing of racism, class and gender and finally discuss the chances to create transversal and inclusive acts of solidarity.

In Austria, anti-right and anti-racist organizations follow different strategies in countering the racist right-wing discourse. They mainly engage in educational work with a focus on youth, in legal



and psychological counselling of migrants, asylum seekers and people who experienced racism, in campaigning and lobbying as well as in monitoring racism. “Activist citizenship” and “acts of citizenship” are not that common—except in the summer of 2015 when such acts created a “welcome culture” for refugees travelling through Austria.

Our interviews revealed that civil society organizations are aware that their diverging framings might hamper cooperation. The two important mobilizing frames of our interview partners are first racism and second radical right. Like racism and anti-racism, our respondents perceive the concept radical right as woolly and unclear. Some of the civil society organizations differentiate between anti-racist and anti-rightist struggles, while others do not separate the frames but contend that struggles against the radical right include anti-racist work. *SOS Mitmensch* prefers racism as a clearer concept for their campaigns. The leftist *Offensive gegen Rechts* remarks: “It is a challenge how to frame our aims to be most inclusive (for cooperation). [...] Because first of all it is important to have a consensus, as it is most important to be a large group and to create pressure in order to be noticed by the right-wing extremists.” (OgR, focus1) However, our interview partners told us that it is difficult to mobilize with the frame “racism”—as for instance public institutions, the social-democratic party and trade unions refuse to use the word racism but talk about integration instead. The concept of racism is perceived as “cumbersome”, it “creates communicative problems” (SOS, also ZARA, focus2) and is therefore not used by all interviewed NGOs.

Applying Pühretmayer’s (2002) typology of anti-racism reveals that only a few organizations see racism in an intersectional or emancipatory way, and thus only some groups use inclusive intersectional frames. Hence, our analysis shows the difficulties to forge alliances under the frame of “emancipatory anti-racism” (ibid., p.298). Struggles over the meaning of anti-racism—the lack of a consensus on an emancipatory or intersectional and transversal approach towards anti-racism—explain the missing momentum in fighting exclusive intersections of the Austrian radical right and a lack of transversal political mobilization. This contributes to the weakness of anti-right movements in the country. Different from that, anti-Nazi frames are able to build broad alliances, also with the social-democratic party and with trade unions. NGOs use this frame strategically to cooperate with these mainstream actors.

Similarly, the representative of *Offensive gegen Rechts* claims that it is difficult to find a common understanding of the *causes* for the rise of right-wing extremism (OgR, focus3). Criticizing capitalism and framing the rise of the radical right as a class issue, for instance, seems to impede joint and transversal action. This representative stated that a successful campaign against the radical right—especially to reach young people—needs to address the feelings of (social) insecurity and “fear of job loss” as a cause for the success of the right, to discuss social inequality and to offer “social security”, “a job and a career” for young people (OgR, focus1). Also, *Helping Hands* stresses that anti-immigration resentments are linked to the question of jobs (HH, focus1). The *MKÖ* representative claims, that the right-wing extremist “Identitarian movement” is successful among young people due to austerity policies, deregulation of the labour market and precarisation of labour (MKÖ, focus3). Also, the representative of *Offensive gegen Rechts* told us, that right-wingers use “anti-capitalist arguments to mobilise for their aims, for instance against capitalists, however sometimes with an anti-Semitic tone” (OgR, focus3): “We have to open the discussion against ‘the right’. We have to ask for social causes, for instance economic causes.” (Ibid.) Hence, the issue of class is part of the imaginary of some organizations fighting the political right and racism, but not of all interviewed NGO representatives (see similarly Leondar-Wright, 2014).

Nevertheless, we also encountered transversal framing and thus “emancipatory anti-racism” which we suggest to label “inclusive anti-racism” or “inclusive political intersectionality”. One of our interview partners puts it in the following way:

“We have different emphases. First, racism in the political sphere [...] And then we try to identify where borders in terms of racism, homophobia, anti-Semitism and sexism are being crossed. Another area are state institutions, authorities as for instance the police [...] where we try to identify if there is discrimination [...].

And the third would be everyday racism. Here it is more difficult to decide where to react and where not.” (SOS, focus2)

Similarly, ZARA stresses that it is most important for their work to strengthen the recognition of difference and plurality and that their fight against racism is combined with fighting other forms of inequality (ZARA, focus1).

Our analysis shows that only a minority of interviewed civil society organizations criticize multiple inequalities and intersecting structures of discrimination and exclusion as well as their complex articulations. Some combine their anti-right and anti-racist activism with issues of feminism and gender equality, queer issues, sexuality, social justice and questions of class and apply an inclusive intersectional framing of anti-racism and anti-right-wing mobilization. MAIZ is a feminist organization of our sample which is very outspokenly fighting against the exclusive intersection of ethnicity, race, sexuality and gender.<sup>37</sup> SOS *Mitmensch* also monitors the “political sphere” in terms of its discriminatory discourses, not being limited to racism but also sensitive for other “-isms” (SOS, focus2). The HOSI representative reports that the organization deals with “multiple discriminations” and points out struggles of, e.g. gay migrants, which *MiGay*, an organization close to HOSI, addresses by providing support to migrant gays (HOSI, focus2).

In sum, activist citizenship based on inclusive intersectionality and transversal politics to counter the radical right’s exclusive intersectionality is still weak in Austrian civil society. While some of the groups we interviewed do combine the struggle against the right and racism with the fight against sexism, homophobia, and social inequality, most of the groups do not have the capacities for such an intersectional strategy—and they do not engage in transversal framing with other groups. Although we identified transversal politics which goes beyond identity issues, we only rarely found broad transversal framings of racism which actively include feminism, gender, sexuality and class. While feminist organizations would be “natural” partners of anti-racist and anti-right movements, the cooperation is rather sporadic, not at least due to a missing intersectional approach to racism. Hence, transversal politics and activist citizenship are rather limited in the Austrian context. It proves to be difficult in the context of “common-sense racism”, of exclusionary intersectionality and of a rather weak civil society to mobilize on a broad scale and, especially, to permeate social and institutional practices of racism, inequality and exclusion towards equality, respect for diversity and solidarity.

### ***Joint activities and frames in Denmark. Acts of citizenship, but lack of political power***

To assess transversal politics this section first presents the successes but also the limits of cooperation of Danish civil society organizations. In the next step we highlight the attempts of these actors to frame inclusive and intersectional solidarity and hence, transversal politics.

The interviewed organizations were mainly founded by native citizens working as “everyday activists” for and with vulnerable groups of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and LGBTIQ people. The self-empowerment of *BLM* and the self-organized activism of the *Castaway Souls* initiated and run by non-status refugees represent the exception. The short-lived radical protest of the latter group illustrates the difficulties for non-status refugees’ practice of activist citizenship, easily blocked by the authorities.

Most civil society organizations are relatively successful in terms of mobilizing, possibly influenced by the long Danish history of organizing “from below”. The *Friendly Neighbours* (VB), initiated in 2015 in a small town in the periphery, is an illustrative example of a successful mobilization of ordinary citizens expanding fast in local groups across the country. The *Trampoline House* initiated by two artists in 2009 has a long history as the only community house with their own premises, and has been able to expand its activities through public and private funding for their strategy “Next Practice”, which aims to get asylum seekers on the labour market

“from day one”. TH’s focus on democracy “from below” within the house also through dialogue, mutual trust and respect for diversity aims to influence public opinion.

Despite an increasingly hostile political and media atmosphere against immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers since the 2015 election, the groups experience a growing support in terms of members, activities, visibility and funding. Activists often referred to the gap between the success of mobilizing ordinary people and their inability to impact on public debates and politics. Thus, the interviewed organizations shared a feeling of powerlessness vis-à-vis the dominant framings of migration and asylum policies although they usually cooperate well with each other and in some cases also with the municipalities.

Most of the interviewed activists are native citizens, and many are first time movers who have not been actively engaged in politics before. The majority of anti-discrimination and pro-migrant groups are grounded in an urban, intellectual and cultural feminist and leftist milieu of Copenhagen and Aarhus, including young women and men from migrant minorities. The *Friendly Neighbours*, initiated in the periphery, have thus been able to mobilize new groups.

The interviewees found it easy to coordinate activities against right-wing populism. Groups working on similar issues, such as LGBTIQ organizations, anti-racism or advocates of asylum seekers and refugees, usually collaborate and support rather than compete with each other. They share mutual knowledge about their area of expertise, such as referring refugees and asylum seekers to RW for legal help, and to VB for help with clothes and furniture.

However, some of the activists referred to conflicts in citizens’ activism between the “welcome culture” based on hospitality and political protest against restrictive migration policies. TH, RW and BLM refer to tensions between “everyday activism” aimed at improving the daily life of refugees “here and now” and the long-term strategies “to change the whole immigration system” (TH, interview 1; RW, interview; BLM, interview). The *Friendly Neighbours* experienced open conflicts between local activists emphasizing the value of “hospitality” and activists focusing on political protest against the immigration system (VB, interview; also, Fenger- Grøndahl, 2016, pp. 101–104). In this case a strategic compromise was reached between local Facebook groups about the freedom of how to implement the shared vision of friendship, curiosity and respect for diversity.<sup>38</sup>

In terms of gender, we found an interesting difference between the organizations’ framings and activities. Gender and women refugees’ issues are not explicitly part of the framing, despite the fact that a large number of female activists are initiators, leaders and coordinators of the activities. Some organizations do offer activities for women, such as TH’s “women’s club”, a safe space for women and their children to learn about women’s and human rights, language, religion, and enjoy cooking together in the “sisters’ cuisine”. We also found a growing awareness among Danish activists of the need to address female migrants, refugees and asylum seekers’ problems, for example in relation to the rules for family reunification<sup>39</sup> (RW, interview). Hence, some Danish activists are aware of intersecting structures of discrimination, domination and “Othering” although their framing mainly addresses anti-discrimination, anti-racism and refugees’ and asylum seekers’ “right to have rights”. Based on this framing they work towards an inclusive intersectional strategy.

Nevertheless, our research shows that there is still a need to strengthen transversal cooperation of activists across social differences and political identities between acts of resistance and solidarity in support of vulnerable groups and to engage women’s groups and organizations more directly in solidarity activism with refugees and asylum-seekers. One conflict which hampers cooperation emerges between the values of hospitality, diversity and solidarity and the claim that criticism of the migration system is “too political”. Another conflict emerges between acts of solidarity “here and now” and the long-term objective of changing the migration system.

To sum up: In Denmark, the space for civil society activism provides a potential for creating counter-strategies “from below” based on transversal alliances around equality and diversity between gender groups, trade unions and the political Left for inclusive intersectionality and solidarity. Despite the growing civil society mobilization, the activists experience marginalization and lack of political influence. The new political majority led by the Social Democratic minority

government may create more favourable opportunities for influencing policies and mobilizing against social inequality across issues of migration, race/ethnicity, gender and class.

### ***Challenges to mobilizing against right-wing exclusive intersectionality. Comparing Austria and Denmark***

This section compares the actors' mobilizations and framings in the light of political cultures, right-wing mobilization strategies as well as gender and welfare regimes in the two countries. Austria and Denmark have different traditions of political cultures and "activist citizenship". In Austria's consensus-oriented party democracy the political space has been occupied by the two big parties, ÖVP and SPÖ for along time, leaving only little space for citizens' activism. Denmark on the other hand is characterized by along tradition of citizens' engagement and "acts of citizenship" for vulnerable and marginalized groups. While the Danish organizations against right-wing politics rest on this tradition of citizens' mobilization, Austrian groups had to establish this sort of "activist citizenship" since the 1990s and therefore focus more on education and activities *for* than *with* migrants.

In the Austrian male breadwinner-oriented gender regime anti-feminism and anti-gender mobilization is part of the right-wing struggle for hegemony. We did not find this strategy in Denmark due to the country's liberal tradition towards gender equality. Here, femonationalist claims that women's rights are important to "our" culture are pertinent in the right-wing discourse (Farris, 2017), which we also found to alimited extend in Austria where the FPÖ uses femonationalist topoi to exclude Muslims.

Different from Austria, the Danish DF is—according to the country's universal welfare regime—pro-welfare and thus supports an exclusionary "welfare nationalism" premised on so-called Danish values. Austrian right-wing populism fits the neoliberal logic, fighting a "conservative welfare regime", while at the same time the FPÖ strategically uses an exclusionary notion of solidarity and welfare in order to attract voters.

These different approaches to the welfare state, differences in gender regimes and different mobilization strategies of the radical right impact on the counter-strategies of civil society groups against exclusionary intersectionality in the two countries. In Austria, mobilization against the radical right is mainly located in a leftist and intellectual urban milieu, which includes anti-Nazi organizations. Due to the country's Nazi past, anti-Nazi mobilization has a tradition since the late 1980s and civil society organizations against the political right are able to connect with long established anti-Nazi groups. Nevertheless, our study shows that the frame "racism" is contested and difficult to use in public discourse. Hence, intersectional frames of anti-racism are not available as a transversal political strategy. Also, the country's conservative gender regime inhibits even civil society organizations to use feminist framings. Austrian civil society organizations only reluctantly focus on class issues and issues of social inequality due to the conservative welfare traditions and strong social partnership structures. Moreover, the groups which developed since the 1970s were rather identity-based due to the powerful role of the two major parties SPÖ and ÖVP. This legacy still prohibits the use of intersectional frames and hampers political cooperation and transversal politics of civil society groups against the radical right.

Differently, Danish anti-right mobilization fighting for equal rights for marginalized groups is based on a strong tradition of voluntary organizations and citizens' activism. The universal welfare regime and the liberal gender regime build upon solidarity with marginalized social groups. This has the potential to be extended to solidarity with immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers and to create an inclusive intersectional strategy. However, conflicts between competing strategies, such as giving priority to political protest against the immigration system or emphasizing solidarity with vulnerable groups has made cooperation between civil society organizations and the political system difficult.

## Conclusions: political intersectionality, transversal politics and activist citizenship

Our study demonstrates that contemporary activism against the populist right is influenced by the national contexts. The comparison between Austria and Denmark discloses important differences in activism against anti-migration, racism and anti-feminism, influenced by differences in welfare and gender regimes as well as civil society traditions in the two cases. The study also illustrates that it is crucial for understanding anti-right-wing mobilization how anti-feminism and pro-welfare are articulated in right-wing political claims, i.e. how “exclusive intersectionality” works.

In Austria, it is not only the lack of resources, which explains the difficulties to successfully introduce counter-strategies to racism and right-wing exclusion. To the contrary, the engagement of Austrian civil society organizations would need a clearer shift towards intersecting discourses of equality and inclusion. While anti-right and anti-racist groups are visible in the Austrian public and have the power to mobilize ad hoc activities, as for the refugees in 2015, they lack the possibility to liaise either with feminist and LGBTIQ groups or with trade unions and leftist parties to foster inclusive framings and especially anti-neoliberal and equality frames. In the Austrian system of social partnership this results in a lack of transversal political power. However, we found changes since the 1990s: Some of the civil society organizations we interviewed explicitly link the issue of racism and preferences for the radical right with neoliberal transformations and thus started to connect anti-racism to issues of social inequality and marginalization of the Austrian workers at the intersection of gender, sexuality and ethnicity.

For the Danish case our analysis illustrates a different dynamic since not only gender and sexuality but also welfare is part of the right-wing struggle for hegemony. The challenge is here to create transversal politics based on intersectional and inclusive solidarity, which concerns equal rights, anti-discrimination and anti-racism. In terms of citizens’ activism tensions and contradictions exist between counter-strategies premised on hospitality and acts of solidarity and those engaged in political protest and acts of resistance. The interviewed civil society organizations use different framings but all address issues of anti-discrimination and anti-racism according to equal rights and usually cooperate relatively closely. One challenge is to foster self-empowerment of vulnerable groups of refugees and asylum seekers overcoming differences between native citizens, residents and non-citizens.

We identified challenges to transversal politics and inclusive political intersectionality of anti-racist civil society organizations in both countries. In Austria, the reluctance towards “emancipatory anti-racism” shows to be a main obstacle for joining forces to fight racist and right-wing discourse and policies. In Denmark, different NGOs cooperate well, but the mainstreaming of an anti-immigration discourse illustrates the challenge to promote a transversal politics transcending exclusive constructions of rights for native citizens only by connecting claims for gender and social equality with anti-racist claims for inclusive solidarity.

Our article suggests a point of departure for an intersectional perspective in the light of radical right challenges. While social movement research focuses on counter-strategies in anti-austerity protests and citizenship studies analyse the activities of non-citizens, we propose that future research on the mobilization against racism and anti-right movements needs to focus on the interface of migration, race/ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality—a focus which we label “inclusive transversal politics”. From this perspective political intersectionality can be a fruitful approach for exploring citizens’ transversal activism within and across solidarity movements inspired by inclusive understandings of politics, cooperation and solidarity.

## Notes

1. The original and full names of parties and organizations are listed in the Appendix.
2. Video material showed that FPÖ leader Heinz-Christian Strache agreed on corrupt deals with a fake rich Russian woman.
3. <http://www.lefoe.at/>.

4. [www.asyl-in-not.org/php/portal.php](http://www.asyl-in-not.org/php/portal.php).
5. [www.zebra.or.at/cms/cms.php](http://www.zebra.or.at/cms/cms.php).
6. The MKÖ is the successor organization of the Austrian Concentration Camp Community Mauthausen, founded by camp survivors of the Mauthausen concentration camp in 1964.
7. The colour “pink” refers to the pink coloured sign homosexuals had to wear in Nazi concentration camps.
8. <https://www.facebook.com/sosracis.dk/>.
9. <http://enar.dk/enar-medlemmer/>.
10. <https://www.leksikon.org/art.php?n=3577>.
11. EMKR was founded by the Women’s Council, [*Kvinderådet*]: <http://interkultureltkvinderaad.dk/eksempel-side-2/>.
12. <http://refugeeswelcome.dk/>.
13. <http://sabaah.dk/front-page/>.
14. <https://www.facebook.com/trampolinhuset/>.
15. <https://www.lgbtasylum.dk/>.
16. <http://www.venligboerne.org/>.
17. <https://www.thedanishparliament.dk/en/news/2019/06/election-result>.
18. The SD government signed apolitical agreement about anew immigration policy with the Socialist Peoples’ Party, the Red-Green Alliance and the Radical Liberal Party: <http://nyheder.tv2.dk/politik/2019-06-26-laes-hele-aftalen-der-goer-mette-frederiksen-til-statsminister>.
19. The concept of political intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991) refers to intersecting discourses and policies in social movements.
20. Yuval-Davis’ (2011, pp. 6–8) intersectionality approach distinguishes between locations, identity politics and political value systems.
21. See (Lazaridis, Campani, & Benveniste, 2016; Sauer, 2018; Siim & Meret, 2018).
22. The study selected the most diverse civil society organization.
23. Helping Hands raises awareness about institutional racism ([www.helpinghands.at/](http://www.helpinghands.at/)).
24. MAIZ, based in Linz and founded in 1994, aims at stopping racism, sexism and homophobia and at challenging “white, western European, patriarchal, (post-)colonial or heterosexual ideas” ([www.maiz.at](http://www.maiz.at)).
25. ZARA monitors right-wing extremism and racism.
26. Zebra, founded in 1986, counsel migrants and asylum seekers.
27. *Asyl in Not* (Asylum in Distress), founded in 1985, empowers their clients during asylum procedures.
28. HOSI, founded in 1979, is counselling gay people and gay asylum seekers.
29. *SOS Mitmenschen’s* emphasis is on political campaigning for human rights, refugees, anti-racism, and social justice.
30. *Offensive gegen Rechts* founded as ahybrid organization perse, is anetwork of 14 organizations fighting the radical right but also taking issues of sexism into account.
31. *FairPlay*, founded in 1997, is lobbying for anti-discrimination in football related contexts.
32. Refugees Welcome has since 2008 been led by Michala Clante Bendixen: <https://www.facebook.com/refugeeswelcomedenmark>.
33. The Trampoline House, acommunity house for and by asylum seekers, founded in 2010.
34. The Friendly Neighbours from 2014 quickly spread from Northern Jutland to more than 150 Danish cities.
35. BLM from 2016 focuses on exclusion, discrimination and institutional racism against black people: <https://www.facebook.com/BlackLivesMatterDenmark/>.
36. The Castaway Souls, arefugee-led movement, started in 2016 in the so-called repatriation camp <https://www.facebook.com/Rejected-souls-of-DenmarkEurope-222564811413741/>.
37. The right-wing and conservative government in 2018 decided to cut the financial support for MAIZ.
38. VB’s local Facebook groups share the three guiding principles: *be kind, curious and respectful*: <http://www.venligboerne.org/>.
39. This is the aim of the Facebook group from 2016: <https://www.facebook.com/WRRRoute/>.

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## Appendix

DF: Dansk Folkeparti  
 DÖW: Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands  
 DRC: Dokumentations- og Rådgivningscenter for racediskrimination  
 EMKR: Etniske Minoritetskvinders Råd  
 FPÖ: Freiheitliche Partei Österreich  
 HOSI: Homosexuellen Initiative  
 LEFÖ: Lateinamerikanische Frauen in Österreich  
 MKÖ: Mauthausen Komitee Österreich  
 ÖVP: Österreichische Volkspartei  
 SOS Mitmensch: SOS Fellow Human Being  
 SPÖ: Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreich  
 VB: Venligboerne  
 ZARA: Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit